

successes that we have enjoyed since the Clinton economic plan was passed.

I thank the Chair.

I yield the floor.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, the pending business before the Senate is the continuing resolution, the large appropriations bill. But there are a couple of other items—one of which we discussed earlier this morning—that must be resolved by this Congress.

I wanted to just mention again why the FAA reauthorization bill is critical. We have talked about the issue of aviation safety and security this morning. But I want to mention to my colleagues one other item that is in this bill that I think is critically important. It deals with the issue of the essential air service program, and the ability to provide airline service to even rural areas of our country.

I have said before—and I know it is repetitious but I want to say again—that, in my judgment, the issue of airline deregulation has been terribly hurtful to many rural States in our country.

Prior to airline deregulation, the State which I represent here in the Congress had numerous jet carriers serving the airline service needs of North Dakota. We had the old Western Airlines, we had Republic Airlines, the old North Central which later became Republic, Northwest Airlines, Frontier Airlines, and Continental Airlines. At various times we have had a wide range of jet carrier service in North Dakota.

But since airline deregulation we now have one carrier serving our State with jet service—Northwest Airlines. Northwest is a fine carrier. I think they provide good service. But, as all of us know, the market system works best only when you have competition. Competition means that people vie for the customers' business by better service and/or lower prices. And when you have one carrier you do not have price competition.

We put in place an essential air service program when airlines were deregulated in this country some 15 or so years ago, and the essential air service program was designed to try to provide some basic protection for rural areas recognizing that the deregulation may mean that the major airlines will go compete between Chicago and Los Angeles, Los Angeles and New York, and New York and Miami. They are not going to rush to go compete between smaller cities and smaller markets.

So the essential airline service program was developed. It was originally

developed and authorized, and expended about \$80 million a year; then down to \$70 million; then \$50 million; and, then \$30 million. Now it is down to about \$25 million a year just providing a skeleton of support for airline service in small communities in our country.

This piece of legislation creates a new and unique way to permanently resolve the essential airline service program at a healthy rate of funding—fully financed—that will be helpful to rural areas all across this country.

Madam President, if I were to leave Washington, DC, today to fly to Los Angeles, CA, and I purchased a ticket with a 2-week advance, with a Saturday night stay and with all of the requirements that the airlines have on those who purchase these tickets, it would cost probably in the neighborhood of \$250 to fly from here all the way across the country to California. The Commerce Committee framed it in terms of going to see Mickey Mouse at Disneyland in Anaheim, CA—about \$250. Then I showed the members of the Commerce Committee a picture of the world's largest cow that sits on top of a hill outside of New Salem, ND. It is called Salem Sue. A giant cow sits on a hill out there not so far from Bismarck. If I wanted to see not Mickey Mouse but Salem Sue instead, and wanted to fly from here to North Dakota half as far as flying from here to Los Angeles, and I made reservations to do that, I would pay twice as much.

In other words, we are left in a circumstance in this country with airline deregulation where—at least with respect to rural areas—if you want to fly twice as far you can pay half as much going to an urban area, but fly to a rural area and fly half as far you will double your ticket price.

Does anyone think there is any rational basis for that? I do not. If you believe that transportation is sometimes repetitious of universal need, and you believe the need for transportation service is relatively universal, it does not make sense to say, "Well, if you live in a very large area of the country you get dirt cheap prices but if you live in a small area of the country, what happens is you just pay through the nose."

What I proposed in the FAA reauthorization bill was an essential air service program that is funded by a fee that is assessed on overflights in this country by foreign carriers. Virtually every country in the world assesses a fee on airlines overflying their space by foreign carriers—virtually every country except the United States. We do not have such a fee. We were intending to promote such a fee, and I propose that when a fee is proposed we attach it, at least part of it, to the essential air service program so that it generates a sufficient amount of money each year; rather than have to go to the Appropriations Committee and seek diminished funding every year for that program, which is essential in providing airline service to rural areas, we

would have a permanent source of funding to fill in where airline deregulation is injuring rural States and smaller communities.

That is what we put in the FAA authorization bill. I authored the piece of legislation. It was supported on a bipartisan basis by Republicans and Democrats. It will permanently solve this problem in a significant way and provide opportunity through better air service in rural parts of our country that have been injured by deregulation. It is simple but effective in solving a real problem.

That is part of this bill. And if this bill dies, that goes. A lot of work over a long period of time to solve a very real problem is going to be gone.

We mentioned earlier this morning that the major issue here, however, is aviation safety and security. The responsibility to pass an FAA authorization bill is one that cannot be abrogated. We cannot end this session of Congress without passing this legislation. I know there is a controversial piece that was attached in conference. Whatever excuse one might want to find for one reason or another to say this is going to have to be delayed, it cannot be voted on now or then, the fact is this Congress cannot adjourn and cannot leave town without addressing this issue. Reauthorizing the functions of the FAA are critical in addressing the aviation safety and security issues that this Congress is obligated to address.

The Senator from Alaska, the Senator from Arizona, and others have spoken this morning, and I would add my voice to theirs, although I might make some different characterizations than I heard in a couple of instances today about what is at stake in this fight, but I would say this. There is no disagreement about the fact that this Congress cannot adjourn unless it resolves this issue. And there will be some of us standing here at the end of this week preventing this Congress from ending its session if it has not enacted an FAA authorization bill that deals with the issue of safety and security in air travel in this country.

I began simply mentioning that there are many other things in this bill which escape a lot of notice, one of which is a critically important piece dealing with improving airline service in rural States and smaller communities across this country which I think is critically needed.

Madam President, I know there are others who want to speak. I did want to add my voice to those who spoke earlier this morning on this FAA reauthorization bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). The Senator from California.

OMNIBUS CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.